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Empowering student teachers to meet the challenge of multilingual schools in Scotland

The post-devolution context in Scotland has provided new opportunities for formulating and debating educational policy and practice which reflect a multilingual society. However, significant contradictions and questions of equity still remain among the different categories of heritage and minority languages in terms of ideology, provision and practice, as they compete within a predominately monolingual and assimilationist state policy. These issues will be examined in the light of pedagogical approaches, within an initial teacher education (ITE) institution, designed to support student teachers to reflect critically on their professional thinking and practice in response to increasingly diverse classrooms. The article concludes with some recommendations aimed to encourage teachers to become active agents of change.

Keywords Scotland, Initial Teacher Education, bilingualism, Gaelic, Scots, Language policy, problem-based learning, Chinese, identity, citizenship, complementary schools

1 Introduction

In order to examine the processes at work in meeting the needs of multilingual speakers in educational contexts, it is important to make explicit at the start the distinction between the various countries that make up the United Kingdom (Scotland, England, Northern Ireland and Wales). Since the Acts of Union between the Parliaments in both Scotland and England in 1707, Scotland has retained control and management over its educational institutions (alongside the legal system and the church) and as a result educational policy and practice has historically remained dissimilar from the ways of England and the rest of the United Kingdom (UK). This autonomy manifests itself in a number of ways including the creation of assessment and qualification bodies, national curriculum formation and implementation, and the organisation and management of Initial Teacher Education (ITE). Notably, the standards which set official parameters on professional knowledge, skills and values required for entry into the teaching profession, are fundamentally different in England and Scotland

(Mentor *et al*, 2006). For an analysis of the formal and cultural distinctiveness of the Scottish education system from the rest of the UK see Humes and Bryce (2003).

1.1 Multilingual tradition

Scotland may be a small nation of five million people but it has a rich linguistic and cultural heritage. Gaelic/Gaidhlig is the longest established of Scotland's languages, spoken throughout recorded history. Settlers originally brought Gaelic to Scotland from Ireland around 500 A.D, as the northern Irish kingdom expanded into the western highlands and islands of Scotland and up to the 17th century was commonly known as Irish, which it still closely resembles.

Scots, derived from a northern dialect of Anglo-Saxon (Old English), has been spoken since the 7th century when the language encroached into the southeast of Scotland as a consequence of Angle invaders from northern England. Historical sources indicate that while, certain languages have held a particular status within the government of Scotland, a further range of additional languages have been spoken by large sections of the community (Murdoch, 1996). For instance, Gaelic was the language of the crown and the government in the 10th century and in the 15th century Scots was the language of commerce, gradually replacing Latin as the language of official documents. During this time Pictish, Gaelic, Cumbric, and Norse were also spoken. The latter was still spoken on the Orkney and Shetland isles until the 19th century. It was not until the 18th century that English was imposed as the language of government and education. Although migration into Scotland during the last century has introduced many more languages, English still remains the predominant language of instruction in schools.

1.2 Multilingual Schools in Scotland

The need for educationalists to take account of the diverse nature of their schools continues to grow as a range of factors have seen the cultural and linguistic landscape change in Scotland in recent years. Demographic shifts mean Scotland is now anticipating a declining population and an increasingly ageing workforce. As a result, the Scottish Government, unlike the rest of the UK, has taken its own position in the immigration debate, expressing a commitment to inward migration and actively encouraging migrant 'guest' workers and their families to live in Scotland in order to fill the existing skills gap. The

expansion of the European Union in 2004 and 2007 thus not surprisingly has seen Scotland receiving a higher proportion of persons seeking employment from the new eastern European accession states, compared to the rest of the UK. This has resulted in no area of Scotland remaining untouched by inward migration. Furthermore, political and economic instability across the globe have seen the arrival of large numbers of refugee and asylum-seeking families to the west of Scotland as part of a dispersal arrangement with the UK government¹. Information gathered for the School Census for Scotland in 2008 confirms that children in Scotland come from a variety of heritages with 138 different languages spoken in the home (Scottish Government, 2009). A recent audit conducted by the two major cities in Scotland (Glasgow and Edinburgh) estimated that around ten to twelve per cent of children in primary schools speak a language other than English at home.

This increasing diversity means teachers in Scotland are likely to encounter multilingual classrooms at some point in their careers and when they do, they will need to be equipped to approach instruction from a position of informed professional knowledge and understanding. But research evidence suggests that most of these teachers feel inadequately prepared to cater for the needs of children with English as an Additional Language (EAL) (Smyth, 2003, SEED, 2004). These views of staff are also replicated in low diversity schools in England (Cline *et al*, 2002) and the Republic of Ireland (Wallen and Nelly-Holmes, 2006). Moreover, a recent study indicates that teacher education only pays bilingualism lip service and persists with a policy discourse emphasising the problem of EAL (Butcher *et al*, 2007). How ITE providers can address some of these fundamental concerns about the changing nature of Scottish schools, particularly from the perspective of pre-service teachers, will be discussed later in this article.

2 Language Policy: Competition and Contradictions

Language policy and planning in Scottish education has taken place in a piecemeal fashion, mainly in the interests of English monolingualism. The predominant languages studied in Scottish schools are French and German whilst Spanish and Italian (usually the domain of

¹ In 2001 Glasgow City Council entered into an agreement with the UK Government to provide accommodation for asylum seekers from London and the South East of England in order to relieve pressure on services such as education, health and housing in these magnet areas of in-migration.

denominational schools²) have a more precarious presence in the public education system. The European Union White Paper on Education and Training (1995) outlined the need for Europeans to be proficient in at least three European languages by the end of compulsory education. The Council of Europe views this competency in several languages as pivotal for improving the capacity of its citizens to move across European state boundaries for employment and study purposes (van Els, 2006). Furthermore, this knowledge of languages strengthens democratic participation and promotes social cohesion (Beacco and Bryam, 2003).

However, Scotland's response to such plurilingual aspiration reveals two conflicting pictures. On the one hand, the Scottish Government's increased investment has seen the progressive lowering of the age that children are taught a foreign language in primary schools, but this change also needs to be viewed in the light of a noticeable decline in students studying a modern foreign languages in secondary schools. This lack of motivation in language learning and climate of negativity at the later stages of schooling (McPake *et al*, 1999), is generally blamed on the current linguistic domination of English and its association with financial systems, global mass media, electronic communication and politics. As a result of this hegemony of English, there exists throughout the UK a widespread belief that the learning of other languages is unnecessary and the expectation that other people will speak English. Not only do these notions disadvantage school children culturally, educationally and economically, but they can also shape negative attitudes towards less prestigious non-European languages.

With the exception of Gaelic and Urdu (taught as a modern foreign language in some secondary schools) there are presently very few opportunities available within mainstream schools in Scotland for speakers of minority languages to develop their skills. This policy context, Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) believes discriminates against minority speakers and contravenes linguistic human rights. It is therefore left to minority communities and concerned parents to organise complementary schools and classes themselves in order to develop their children's heritage languages. According to Creese *et al* (2006) the creation of these 'separate spaces' for learning are as a direct result of prevailing monolingual and assimilationist policies. Recent research in Scotland (McPake, 2006) has shown that the extent and nature of such provision are very variable. While there are some

² Roman Catholic schools account for 15% of state-funded schools in Scotland.

excellent initiatives, and the level of commitment among providers is high, much of the provision is poorly resourced as community members pursue limited grants subjected to the vagaries of local council budgets. The profile of community language teachers is also varied – they include volunteers, parents or visiting international students. Not surprisingly these ‘teachers’ lack prestige and suffer from a very marked lack of professional development opportunities. With limited official funding complementary schools continue to suffer from lack of official recognition and status. For many languages, there is simply no provision at all and Scotland is therefore not currently in a favourable position to exploit its linguistic resources as a source of cultural wealth.

Regrettably, the educational activity and achievements of children in these complementary schools is largely unacknowledged by mainstream schools. This is despite recent seminal ethnographic research (in England but noticeably absent in Scotland), which highlights the potential creative interaction that can occur when cultures and languages come into contact in complementary schools. These studies show how literacy skills learnt in these classrooms are transferred to other learning contexts (Bhatt *et al*, 2004; Kenner, 2004).

The status of community languages is also frequently determined by shifting ideologies mediated through socio-economic considerations rather than for reasons associated with the educational enrichment of bilingualism. For example, China’s emerging position of strength within global economics and trading systems has produced demands, within both business and political circles, for Chinese to be taught in Scottish schools to support Scotland’s commercial activity with China (Shuhua, 2002). As a result, the training of teachers of Chinese commenced at the University of Edinburgh in 2007 and the teaching of Chinese to native and non-native speakers has been successfully implemented in a number of primary and secondary schools in Scotland.

In 2000, the Scottish Parliament published its National Cultural Strategy with an aim to promote Scotland’s languages as cultural expressions. According to Landon (2001) this is the most comprehensive statement of aspiration towards the recognition and promotion of Scotland’s multilingual heritage. The key priorities within the strategy include statements such as ‘*ensure that through their initial training and continuing professional development (CPD), teachers are well prepared to promote and develop all pupils’ language skills*’ and ‘*to consider how the languages of Scotland’s ethnic*

minorities can be supported and how their contribution to Scotland's culture can be recognised and celebrated'. Despite these admirable statements, the impact of the strategy on Scotland's community languages has so far been disappointingly inadequate, in terms of practice and action. For instance, the recruitment of bilingual assistants working in Scottish schools has increased recently, but their role still remains one of accessing the learner's home language, in the early stages, as a means of speeding up the acquisition of English rather than on continuing their first language skills as a legitimate activity in its own right. As a newly developing area within educational services, bilingual support, is also fraught with difficulties, including its perceived lack of status and its position outside mainstream curriculum planning.

The creation of political devolution in Scotland has reinvigorated general interest in the interwoven relationship between language, nationalism and identity formation. While Gaelic and Scots have secured enhanced legal status in the eyes of the European Union (alongside other regional and minority languages such as Catalan and Basque in Spain and Sami in Finland) their impact on schools remains marginal.

Despite, Gaelic being the language of crown for a short period, the language has suffered from a gradual decline as it became increasingly marginalized in dominant English speaking environments. In fact, active discrimination saw Gaelic speakers banned from speaking their own language in the playground in the early 1900s and over the course of the twentieth century there has been a rapid language loss as Gaelic became restricted to domestic language domains. An interesting comparison here is the socio-linguistic revitalisation of Welsh and Irish where the languages have gained enhanced legal status and the development of bilingualism is an integral part of the primary school curriculum in both Wales and the Republic of Ireland.

The influential role of education in Gaelic's survival has been crucial according to the Gaelic Development Agency (Comunn na Gàidhlig, 1997) and provision for Gaelic in educational establishments has been transformed in the last three decades after substantial investment and support from Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED). Many of the primary Gaelic units consist of composite classes attached to small rural schools in the Highlands and islands, although there are now also units located in the major cities.

Despite criticisms of ‘elite bilingualism’, due to the socio-economic profile of some of the parents, the research conducted so far into the Gaelic immersion programme³ has been very encouraging in terms of high levels of biliteracy competence and the children’s general academic ability (Johnstone *et al*, 1999). Although the expansion of Gaelic medium classrooms has made the Scottish school system open to bilingual education, with the accompanying positive attainment results compared to their monolingual peers, this message is frequently lost within political and policy decision-making circles. Consequently, there are currently no serious propositions to extend this type of provision to other languages in Scotland. See Landon (2001) who analyses the reasons frequently advanced to justify this inequitable approach to language education. This attitude is to be regretted, as Hélot (2006) notes, that if, as research suggests, bilingualism is an asset, then it is an asset in any language, irrespective of the status the language is held in society.

Since devolution there have been moves towards reclaiming the Scots language and achieving European recognition in 2001 has considerably raised its linguistic profile (albeit it is not protected in the same way as Gaelic which has been officially granted ‘endangered’ status). Most Scots understand the language and statistics on the number of speakers are not available although some put the figure at anything between 30% and 60% of the population (Donovan and Niven, 2003). Scots, which was the language of government and education in Scotland until the 18th century has a rich and varied literature. Recently, there has been a growing number of imaginative school based initiatives to encourage the language with accompanying resources but the reality is that the promotion of the language is on a piecemeal basis, restricted to a small number of committed individual teachers and schools with an interest in Scots whilst inclusion of Scots in the curriculum frequently consists of the tokenistic recitation of poetry written in Scots without any analysis of the language. Unfortunately, Scots has suffered from its sister relationship to English with corresponding disagreements among linguists as to whether Scots constitutes a distinct language, or whether it is just a collection of dialects (Angelosanto, 2002). The standing of the language is also subject to fierce debates among teachers, some of who perceive Scots as nothing more than slang or an inferior form of standard English, unfit for educational purposes. As a consequence the use of spoken Scots in the classroom is actively prohibited by some

³ The entire primary school curriculum is taught through Gaelic using immersion in the language as a learning and teaching methodology.

educationalists. Despite these different opinions as to the status of Scots, if incorporated and validated in classrooms, children's knowledge of the language could be used in language awareness activities and a resource for further language learning. This can be compared to the use of Alsatian in a successful language awareness project in a primary school in France (Hélot and Young, 2006).

The establishment of the Scottish Parliament in 1999 has provided greater opportunities for independent policy development and the subsequent broadening of the civic participation in the decision-making process has created a forum for debating language policy issues. As a result of this new political entity an Inquiry was set up into the role of educational and cultural policy in supporting and developing Gaelic, Scots and minority languages in Scotland in 2001 and the subsequent report in 2003 made a commitment to introduce a national language strategy to guide the development and support of Scotland's languages. The aim of the strategy is fourfold: to celebrate and promote the rich diversity of languages spoken in Scotland, to raise the profile of Scotland's languages, to ensure that this rich heritage is recognised as a national resource and to encourage people living in Scotland to learn languages other than their own. The latest draft document circulated for consultation in 2007 'A Strategy for Scotland's Languages' has made a step forward by placing a duty on authorities and public bodies to develop appropriate language plans to take account of language and communication issues for the communities which they serve. But more significantly it contains a kind of escape clause '*We do not bear the same responsibility for the development of other world languages which are used by communities with their roots now in Scotland*' (page 5 paragraph 5). This discourse directly contradicts earlier promises during the inquiry about respecting, promoting and supporting *all* of Scotland's languages.

In short, the consultation procedure is to be welcomed, but the evolution of a synchronised language policy for Scotland has proved to be slow and inconclusive. Furthermore, the potential outcome only reaffirms the existing language hierarchies and falls short of a clear commitment to an inclusive and shared policy development to guide the development of Scotland's languages across the different language education fields as advocated by Lo Bianco (2001). The competing political forces at work governing this decision-making process is aptly summed up by Shohmany (2006) who states:

Language Policy falls in the midst of the battles currently taking place in nation-

states between demands of the different groups for recognition, self-expression and mobility and those in authority eager to maintain national and homogeneous ideologies in relation to local, national and global languages.

Shohmany (2006, 46)

As this brief overview of the place of languages in Scottish education indicates, policy and provision has developed in an ad hoc way. This creates challenges and tensions for prospective teachers as they enter linguistically diverse schools and this will be addressed in the next section.

3 ITE in Scotland: challenges and responsibilities

As the previous section outlined, one of the challenges for ITE providers is to design programmes where opportunities are created for sensitizing trainee teachers to the relative inequalities of the languages operating in multilingual schools and society at large. However, as student teachers enter the programme they are constrained by their lived experience and view of the world. Here, Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* can be taken as a starting point to include a *language habitus* which represents a system of dispositions, and unconscious ways of thinking and behaving, that individuals internalise over time as a result of their location in particular environments and sets of social relationships (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). That is to say, in the Scottish educational context, dominant ideologies and absorption of cultural norms constructs discourses where some languages are deemed superior to others.

As a result, Smyth (2003), who investigated the dominant discourse of primary school teachers in the west of Scotland, showed that teachers' construction of pedagogical practices was perceived exclusively in terms of English. Furthermore, there was also a perception that minority parents who spoke a language other than English at home would inhibit their child's acquisition of English. Smyth asserted that these taken-for-granted practices are based on long established cultural mindsets that believe that bilingual children have to become monolingual in order to succeed in the educational system. Yet this epistemological orientation is clearly at odds with well established empirical research evidence that demonstrates that the learning of two or more languages increases intellectual and literate abilities and broadens the child's outlook on life, whilst failure to develop children's skills in their first language can have adverse effects (Cummins, 2000; Bialystok, 2001; Thomas and Collier, 2002).

Whilst experiencing placement in schools, students will also encounter a number of contradictory discourses currently being played out within political and educational forums. On the one hand, there have been moves towards embedding citizenship education within the mainstream curriculum (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2002) with an emphasis on informed decision making, and taking thoughtful and responsible action. This acts as a springboard to encourage children and young people to actively engage in issues of social justice and intercultural encounters at a local, national and global level. In the same vein, the Commission on Integration and Cohesion's recommendations and the Scottish Government's '*One Scotland: Many Cultures*' campaign recognizes the vital role played by schools in promoting community cohesion (Scottish Executive, 2002; Runnymede Trust, 2008).

On the other hand, there has been a political rebranding of the concept of citizenship, in response to the increasing volume and diversity of migrants. The UK Government's prioritisation of community cohesion agenda aims at countering the perceived challenges that new migrants pose to a cohesive 'national identity'. The result is the implementation of English language and citizenship testing for new migrants seeking to gain right of residence. This concept of national identity as a political ideology sends powerful messages to educationalists, where citizenship requirements are made conditional on the proficiency of the 'official' language in association with a false notion of loyalty to a 'British' identity. This policy of using language to legitimise or de-legitimise people only reinforces assimilationist and monolingual agendas rather than valuing diversity. This is an illustration of what Shohamy (2006,1) calls covert and hidden agendas operating beyond the public's awareness. That is where language policy is defined in the broadest sense, 'beyond statements about policies but through a variety of mechanisms that create de facto language policy and practices'.

When student teachers are dealing with the challenges of the interpretation of the place of languages, literacies, religions and cultures in education, it is all too easy to resort to stereotypical and simplistic categorizations without exploring the richness of human reality and diversity within and between minority communities. Contributors to this debate such as Ang (2008) criticize curriculum documents where the rhetoric of 'providing for cultural difference' may serve to mask structural inequalities, particularly around class and ethnicity. Furthermore, the guidance is indicative of fixed linguistic and cultural orientations rather than notions of fluid, evolving and hybrid identities. Recent studies such as Gregory (2008) on young children in urban

schools in England and Hancock's (2006a) exploration of Chinese families in Scotland have confronted these homogenized understandings of how people live out their lives, in terms of individuals' changing proficiency, allegiances and affiliations to different languages and literacies and how these are inextricably entwined with emerging multiple identities. Teachers-in-waiting not only need to consider how they can build on these varied life experiences of multilingual children in imaginative and stimulating ways in their practice, but must also learn to decentre and reflect on their own situated identities in today's postmodern and globalised world.

Initial Teacher Education (ITE) for primary teachers at the School of Education, University of Edinburgh, is delivered through two types of programme: a four-year programme, leading to a Bachelor of Education degree, or a one-year postgraduate diploma programme for those who have completed their first degree in other disciplines. In common with the majority of practicing teachers, the students enrolled on ITE programmes at Scottish Universities are mainly white, middle-class, monolingual and (in primary schools) female. However, preparation for teaching requires this largely homogenous student population to work towards a number of standards which specifies the range of professional skills, abilities, knowledge, understanding and values that students should be assessed against during their programme of study as stipulated by the General Teaching Council of Scotland (GTCS, 2006). Whilst there is no explicit mention of bilingualism in the twenty-four benchmark statements, the following elements are included:

Demonstrate an understanding of the principles of equality of opportunity and social justice and of the need for anti-discriminatory practices

Demonstrate the ability to respond appropriately to gender, social, cultural, religious and linguistic differences among pupils.

All ITE institutions in Scotland would claim to address the above expected benchmark standards in their programmes but an overcrowded ITE curriculum means features of diversity frequently remain at the fringes of teaching and learning (Arshad and Mitchell, 2007; Hall and Cajkler, 2008). If as research suggests, student teachers tend to leave teacher education programmes with the same, or similar, beliefs as those they entered with (Schultz *et al*, 2008) it is imperative to gauge students' attitudes regarding language learning and issues of language diversity from the outset for these conceptions have a direct impact on their future instructional practices. In partnership with another ITE

institution, IUMF d' Alsace, France⁴ a questionnaire was distributed to students at the School of Education at the beginning of the postgraduate programme in order to gain insights into the participants' experience and knowledge of the diverse school contexts in which they will be working (Hancock *et al*, 2006b). Initial reading of the questionnaire data showed that students had more experience of additional language learning than the frequently applied 'monolingual' label would suggest. The following responses are illustrative of this:

I lived abroad until I was eighteen. I studied in a 'British' primary and secondary International school. The classes were a mixture of English and Portuguese. I also studied French, Spanish and Russian.

I have a degree in French and Japanese. I married a Moroccan and lived in Morocco for two years and learnt Arabic.

I taught EFL in South Korea for three years. After living and working with Koreans who had little English I gained a good knowledge of the language.

My father is from Hong Kong and my mother from Mainland China. We spoke Hakka at home. When I was nine I went to the weekend Chinese school and learnt Cantonese. After my University degree I went to Taiwan and studied Mandarin.

Although there are an increasing number of students from minority backgrounds enrolling on the programme and white students with knowledge of other languages, many of the respondents dismissed their language learning skills. For example, when asked if they considered themselves bilingual, statements such as 'No I am not bilingual but I can speak Spanish and some French' and 'I can speak French fluently but do not consider myself bilingual as I began learning French in High school' were common. The perception here, in conjunction with additional information gathered from the questionnaires, is that you have to speak two languages from birth and it also requires native-speaker type competency to be considered bilingual. Of interest, during a presentation on the programme by a Scots speaker, as part of a language awareness session, a significant number of the student cohort claimed to speak Scots. Yet, not one of them mentioned this fact in the questionnaire. It is unfortunate that the students' knowledge of languages and different varieties of English is under-valued.

⁴ An ITE course 'Home language/School Language' written in collaboration between the University of Edinburgh and IUMF d'Alsace was part of a European SOCRATES funded Programme, Teacher Education for the Support of Second Language Acquisition (TESSLA). For details of the course see Hancock *et al*, (2006b).

Analysis of the questionnaire data also highlighted a number of other misconceptions about bilingualism and additional language learning that required addressing during the programme. For instance, whilst recognizing that the family's first language should still be spoken in the home, many of the students felt the exclusive use of this language would inhibit the child's acquisition of English as the following views reveal:

Try to expose them to as much English as possible by having friends to play with and ask parents to speak English occasionally

Make sure English is given an equal weighting with the other language

I would advise the parents to speak 30 mins of English every evening at home

Frequently, the child's bilingualism was conceptualised as a potential problem rather than an asset. The common advice given by the students was to encourage more spoken English in the home if the child was experiencing difficulties in class, regardless of the parents' proficiency in this language, as these responses suggest:

I would encourage practising English, especially if they are struggling. They could speak it after dinner or all weekend.

Encourage the speaking of English as well especially where homework is involved. It depends on whether the child is struggling or not.

Encourage them in both English and the home language but don't allow it to exclude or disadvantage them in anyway from their peers.

Only one student out of the thirty-six responses expressed the wish to continue to develop the child's first language. This echoes research conducted by Smyth (2003), who discovered that teachers viewed the bilingual pupils' progress as being evidenced only when the child made more use of English.

The responsibility, therefore, of ITE in preparing prospective teachers for the challenges and dilemmas of linguistically diverse classrooms, is fourfold. First, to encourage students to explore and re-evaluate their personal beliefs and values about language issues and identity construction; secondly, to enter into a debate and challenge the taken-for-granted language learning theories and policies handed down to teachers; thirdly, to examine how the above influences have

implications for their professional practice and finally to use this new knowledge base to become advocates for change.

That said, a note of caution is required at this juncture. It would be foolhardy to suggest that students, beginning their career, will be fully prepared and be experts in the field after the programme, especially as the knowledge base of teaching is constantly changing (Richards and Farrell, 2005). Therefore, it should be recognized that the ITE programme is a tentative start as teacher educators attempt to lay a solid foundation for student's life-long learning. For example, classrooms are not only places where children learn, they are also places where aspiring teachers can learn as well. With a commitment to creating a caring ethos and listening to the learner's voice, students can gain valuable insights into individual children's linguistic and cultural backgrounds and then apply these intercultural insights to their own teaching. As Schultz *et al* (2008,155) suggest 'taking a listening stance implies entering the classroom with questions as well as answers, knowledge as well as a clear sense of the limitations of that knowledge'.

3.1 Problem-Based Learning (PBL)

Reform of the curriculum programmes at the School of Education, allowed an opportunity to reassess our responsibilities towards preparing students for the rapidly changing demands of diverse classrooms and rethink the philosophy of teacher education instruction. The ensuing collegial discussions resulted in the incorporation of more student-centred methods, such as problem-based learning (PBL), into the course design. This approach enables students to actively participate in more reflexive thinking and to gain access to alternative perspectives into multilingual classrooms. Since its inception as an innovation of teaching and learning for medical students in Canada in the late 1960s, PBL has attracted interest in various academic contexts across the globe (Stokes, 2001). Problem-based learning is an instructional method involving collaborative group enquiry in an attempt to seek potential solutions to real world problems (Bond and Feetti, 1997). That is, it envisages learning as a process of co-construction of knowledge drawn from the seminal research of Vygotsky and Bruner where through sharing our understandings of the world with others, new understandings are generated. Integral to this are the principles of listening to others and nurturing respectful relationships, but also a commitment to empowering students to critically reflect on their own beliefs, professional thinking and learning.

To engage students' curiosity, one of the courses at the School of Education starts with the presentation of an authentic problem that is grounded in school placement experience and the realities of diverse classrooms. This replaces the traditional lecture where subject knowledge is communicated to passive recipients. Students are then provided with a series of scaffolding workshop sessions designed to promote them to think critically about new theoretical understandings and their relationship to standard classroom practice. At the end of each session students revisit and interrogate the initial 'problem' based on new understandings as well as opportunities to access professional reading and pursue further questions (refer to Hancock *et al* (2006b) for an illustration of such a scenario and subsequent activities). This empowering pedagogy should continuously provoke students to confront and challenge dominant discourses and the power structures that subordinate certain languages; it should also sharpen student's understanding of the social, cultural and political origins and influences of the place of languages in schools. As Costa *et al* (2005, 106) advise, ITE's need to develop strategies to guide students in developing a reconstructivist perspective toward their professional role 'while working to transform inequitable educational institutions and practices'.

The value of a PBL approach within social sciences is not without its challenges. These potential shortcomings centre on the lack of robust assessment systems but more controversially, the students' own worldview they bring to the learning situation and as a result the type of the knowledge generated through collaborative enquiry. In reality this means that, participants may be unprepared to engage with the issues ideologically as 'they respond to difference in terms of deficit and bring uncontested prejudices and discriminatory constructs to bear upon the issues under consideration' (Landon, 2006, 201). Despite these potential criticisms, course evaluations of a PBL approach have proved very successful as a way of engaging students in serious professional dialogue and debate and embedding issues of linguistic diversity and social justice within ITE curriculum programmes (Young, 2006; Morgan and Wrigley, 2007).

4 Future Directions

The PBL approach within the ITE programme attempts to prepare students to teach within multilingual classrooms by engaging students with vital issues of language policy, practice and research. The aim is empower students to transform their future pedagogical practice and become active agents of change. However, much more needs to be done

as ITE curriculum constraints frequently leave little room for listening to students and deconstructing their own cultural belief systems. Despite these limitations there are also windows of opportunity for developing the preparedness of trainee teachers for the challenges and complexities of schools that are growing in linguistic diversity.

A criticism of the current approach to teaching linguistic and cultural diversity within ITE programmes is that tokenistic and narrow understanding of multicultural education (playing safe with an emphasis on celebrating exotic aspects of minority cultural traditions) and language awareness topics (putting parents and children's background under the microscope and treating them as cultural artefacts) only perpetuate notions of difference and prejudice; they do little to confront racism and the discriminatory barriers inherent in institutional policies and practices. However, drawing on theoretical frameworks, have the potential to engage students in further reflexive thinking and collaborative negotiation in order to gain a deeper understanding of the complex nature of language and literacy in multilingual settings.

An illustration of this type of paradigm is Hornberger's (2003) '*Continua of Biliteracy*' which makes it possible to examine in detail the power relationships that are inherent within policies and practices in multilingual societies⁵. This is a strength of the framework as it allows reflective practitioners to evaluate their daily practice, not just in schools in the United States but also worldwide. For example, how can educators move from the traditionally more powerful monolingual context of biliteracy to the traditionally less powerful bi(multi)lingual context? Students can make choices and exercise power by inviting parents to read stories in their home language and encourage children to write and publish bilingual/multilingual identity texts within the classroom (see Cummins, 2006 for a description of the Dual Language Showcase project). Celebrating children's accomplishments gained at complementary schools and acknowledging their biliteracy talents within individual learning portfolios communicates the value of their linguistic and cultural capital within mainstream education. All these actions challenge the dominant educational discourse that claims that developing a child's first language hinders the learning of English language. In addition, the practice feeds into current Government policies centred on the concepts of raising achievement and aspiration, consulting with children and building on out-of-school learning. Not

⁵ The Biliteracy Model consists of twelve continua under of the headings of Context, Development, Content and Media of Biliteracy

surprisingly, the *Continua Model* has productively served as a means for exploring the knowledge base and dilemmas confronting bilingual and language educators as practiced at the University of Pennsylvania Graduate school of Education (Hornberger, 2004).

Giroux (2005) believes that the post 9/11 world of conflict and increasing social tensions around religious beliefs has created a situation where the 'borders' between people have not been collapsing but forcefully rebuilt. A potential for ITE programme designers to foster future 'border crossing' is to give students opportunities to observe the teaching and learning of language and literacy in different cultural contexts during their placements. An initiative of this type, where student teachers visit community language classes and feedback their experiences to their peers, has been developed at Middlesex University (Robertson, 2007). A similar project in Scotland will have the dual purpose of increasing prospective teachers' understanding and working knowledge of multilingual speakers in educational contexts as well as acknowledging ITE institutions' commitment, under current curriculum reforms, to make school placements more flexible and socially acceptable by building partnerships with voluntary and community agencies.

In contrast to the increasing social and ethnic diversity of the school population, there has been more control and direction of teachers' professional work. Neo-liberal politics within devolved government have seen a press for accountability, where close attention is paid to the importance of meeting government literacy targets and where schools are 'marketed' on their attainment levels. The result for teachers has been less autonomy and moves towards standardized assessment procedures, a more prescriptive curriculum and whole class teaching (Hunt, 2001). Anecdotal evidence suggests that teachers implement curriculum guidelines to the letter, as these are the standards used by the Inspectorate of schools (HMIE) to assess and report on the quality of education. This close adherence to curriculum leaves little space for engaging with the development of languages and the individual needs of bilingual children (in terms of language acquisition, dispositions, learning styles and behaviour). In this standards-driven context, the support for children new to English is frequently viewed as the responsibility of support staff rather than mainstream class teachers (Bourne, 2001).

However, the new Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) in Scotland offers some hope as it challenges staff to think differently about curriculum

design (Munn *et al*, 2004). The underlying principles behind CfE are to encourage teachers to think creatively, make connections between learning in different subject areas and allow more personalization and choice. One of the frequently cited reasons for not mainstreaming the teaching of community languages in Scotland is the scattered nature of the learners who share the same language. One potential solution, under the new flexible curriculum, is for these minority children who are geographically isolated, to share resources and develop teaching and learning through video conferencing, using the national schools intranet for Scotland (GLOW). This ICT initiative has already proved successful in connecting Gaelic speakers in the remote island communities in the West of Scotland and more recently school-based Confucius Classrooms, acting as local hubs, to promote and support teaching and learning of Chinese (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2008). By raising student teachers' awareness of the potential of GLOW, this language learning opportunity can be made available to all children in Scottish schools. The result will be to raise awareness of languages among the monlingual school population and thus have a positive impact on intercultural sensitivity and education for citizenship initiatives.

As schools adapt to the new Curriculum for Excellence, so ITEs also need to rethink the traditional approach to the teaching of discrete and isolated curriculum areas so as to better prepare students for school realities. A step towards this objective is for programmes to treat the teaching about issues and concepts of multilingualism as a salient and recurrent theme that can permeate the whole programme. Staff discussions are currently investigating the implementation of this innovation and we look forward to more collaboration in the future where issues of diversity are no longer delivered as an add-on component but are firmly embedded throughout initial teacher education.

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